

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023**

Meeting Date: Wednesday, August 2, 2023

Attendees: Advisory Committee Members

Steve Krai, Ben Carver, Louis Sun

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

Christine Gordon, Keisha Kelley, Julie Osborn, Valerie Gregory, Jaime Marotte, Jon Hermison, Sarah Miller, Tomas Eggers

Public

Roberto Morales, Steven Garner, Bob Dunn, Sue Mosburg

Item 1 – Introductions

- Keisha Kelley, Program Manager acted as moderator for this meeting. Meeting was held via video/teleconference and in person at the CalEPA building.

Item 2 – Agenda Review

- Keisha Kelley reviewed the agenda for all. It was explained that the meeting is being recorded and Keisha requested everyone speak up and say their name when speaking to ensure accuracy on minutes.

Item 3 – Public Comments

- Steven Garner, provided quick update on Advanced Water Treatment Certifications, currently one hundred and nine (109) Grade III, forty-four (44) Grade IV, and twenty-seven (27) Grade V.

Item 5 – Wastewater Sub Workgroup Recommendations

- Josh Vierra requested to have this topic added to the agenda to further discuss details of what was recommended by the Operator-In-Training (OIT) Sub-Workgroup at the June 27th Joint Advisory Committee Meeting. The recommendations presented by the OIT Sub-Workgroup: 1) changing the educational requirement to allow for educational credits be obtained after OIT certification is obtained; and 2) allow agencies the option to establish a formal onboarding apprenticeship program in lieu of the OIT certification requirement.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023

- Chrisine Gordon asked if there were any questions or comments on the OIT Sub-Workgroup recommendations. Josh had intended to lead the discussion, however, he was not in attendance.
 - Steve Krai - I was on the Sub-Workgroup. The second recommendation was the one to be discussed. I believe the Sub-Workgroup determined that if implemented parameters for apprenticeship programs will be necessary, which will require staff time, to determine if the agencies apprenticeship program meet the parameters. The other issue is quantifying how many agencies would participate/ how widespread interest would be. Agencies in rural areas are typically smaller and can't pay OIT's, so it is voluntary. Once certified, they tend to take positions at a different facility for higher pay. The question would be if there was funding from the state to help support OIT positions in rural agencies.
 - Ben Carver – The first recommendation makes a lot of sense and I believe we all agreed to move that forward. It may also help smaller agencies, rural agencies. It will help people get their OIT certification by allowing them to meet the educational requirements after the fact. I'm still a little confused on the details of the second recommendation, and I thought we agreed to move forward with more modifications.
 - Sue Mosburg– I don't understand what the deficiency is with the home study courses, (Offered by the Office of Water Programs), that are already of a known standard and are used everywhere.
 - Christine Gordon – The educational points are still required. However, they would not be required prior to the OIT certification being obtained. OIT's would have a three (3) year period to obtain the required six (6) educational points.

Item 4 – Office of Enforcement Update

- Tomas Eggers provided an update for the Office of Enforcement (OE)
 - Nine (9) cases have been resolved since 8/22. The majority of those cases included insufficient certification levels, expired certifications, or failures to obtain a Chief Plant Operator.
 - Fourteen (14) cases, for operator misconduct, have been closed to date. Six (6) with action, seven (7) without action, and one (1) as a result of insufficient evidence.
 - These actions have included three (3) reprimands, and five (5) notices of violations sent to the systems.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023

- Currently, there are three (3) active cases and several pending actions including notices of violations.

Item 6 – Wastewater Operator Certification Program Updates:

- Examination statistics
 - Keisha Kelley – A handout (see page 6) was provided and discussed: The handout included a six (6) month comparison of the pass and fail rates, by grade level, from July 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, and January 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023. Also included in the handout is the cumulative pass and fail rates from inception of computer-based testing through June 30, 2023. In the final six months of the Fiscal Year there was a nine (9) percent decrease in the grade II pass percentage and a six (6) percent increase in the grade IV pass percentage. All other grades had less than a five (5) percent difference.
 - Steve Krai – Would it be possible to see the pass and fail rates for the two (2) years prior to the inception of computer-based testing for comparison?
 - Valerie Gregory – I can see what I can pull up and we will get that to you.
 - Louis Sun – There was a nine (9) percent decrease for grade II, is there any other data that may explain why it decreased?
 - Valerie Gregory – We do not have any other data that would determine that. Even when examinations were paper-based, we would see fluctuations similar to these fluctuations.
 - Christine Gordon – The written examinations were offered two (2) times a year and had specific cycles of testing and we were better able to determine or identify based on the cycle. Now that the examinations are computer-based and offered year-round, it is going to be a lot harder to identify other trends. Also, because computer-based testing is new, it is going to take at least three (3) to five (5) years to gather enough data to compare any trends. What did we do in 21/22 as opposed to 25/26. We are still in that new stage where we really can't determine what the trends are.
 - Valerie Gregory – Also, now that operators have more opportunities to retake the examinations, the trends are going to be different. They are able to take the exam up to five (5) times a year, if they fail and reapply.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023

- Christine Gordon – The inability to re-evaluate and award partial credit on the computer-based examinations may also be a cause of lower pass rates. Written examinations could be re-evaluated, and partial credit given. Computer-based testing is multiple choice with no ability to re-evaluate and award partial credit. Due to that you will likely see lower pass rates.
- Steve Krai – I believe last meeting we discussed possibly looking over specific questions, the analytics, and the data to determine if there are specific questions that people are consistently missing. To determine if questions possibly need to be rewritten or something.
- Valerie Gregory – That is done as requested. If someone emails us to report a question that they believe is not good, we send it to the program engineer for evaluation. Regular evaluations of examination questions are something that we can do in the future.
- Christine Gordon – We are going to need to look into what data and reports the third-party vendor can provide and revisit this.
- Ben Carver – Are there any plans to do a survey or form a subcommittee to review the exams subject matter to determine if it covers technology that is not widely used in the state or new technology not represented?
- Christine Gordon – Yes, exam validation has not been done in some time and is needed.
- Steven Garner – I echo Steve's comments about the statistics. At California-Nevada American Water Works Association we have found analyzing the examinations annually is helpful for all involved. I am happy to share the information with Keisha to show you what we are able to get from our vendor and perhaps your vendor will be able to do the same.
- Christine Gordon – Does it give a breakdown for the operator if they did not pass? Or is it a report that you receive from the vendor?
- Steve Garner – It is more accumulative for everybody in that cohort period.
- Christine Gordon – Yes, can you please get with Keisha on that. I would like to see what reports you are getting.
- Sue Mosburg – If there is a certain threshold that is missed then those can be identified to see if they are poorly written questions, etc. That constant feedback would be beneficial for everyone, including the operator who would like to see what they missed.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023

- Valerie Gregory – A fail score report shows the breakdown of scores in particular categories.
- Online Application Portal
 - Phase 1 of the online application portal that is estimated to go live at end of August consists of lower-level examination applications. We are currently completing internal testing and will solicit stakeholder testers prior to going live. We have 3 phases anticipated in our online application portal. However, we do not have an estimated date for completion of all phases yet.
 - An online application will require an online payment. We will still accept paper applications, if needed, but we will encourage online applications.
- Operator Certification Customer Service Survey
 - Survey launched in March 2023, and will provide an update on a semi-annual basis. Our goal is to provide the first update in September.

Item 7 – Schedule Next Advisory Committee Meeting

- Keisha informed the Advisory Committee that unless we have a request to schedule a meeting this year, we will plan to schedule in the spring of next year.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – August 2, 2023

Computer-Based Testing Pass/Fail – 6-Month Comparison

Reporting Period: July 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
Grade 1	197	110	87	56%
Grade 2	151	83	68	55%
Grade 3	150	56	94	37%
Grade 4	42	11	31	26%
Grade 5	77	18	59	23%
Totals	617	278	339	45%

Reporting Period: January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
Grade 1	142	75	67	53%
Grade 2	156	71	85	46%
Grade 3	170	65	105	38%
Grade 4	47	15	32	32%
Grade 5	73	14	59	19%
Totals	588	240	348	41%

Grade II had a 9% decrease in passing percentage in final 6-months of the Fiscal Year.

Grade IV had a 6% increase in passing percentage in the final 6-months of the Fiscal Year.

All other grades had less than 5% difference.

CUMULATIVE COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL – DWOC and WWOC				
Reporting Period: February 20, 2021 (CBT Inception) – June 30, 2023				
Grade	Examinees	Pass Count	Fail Count	Pass Percent
Dist. Grade 1	2,333	1,571	762	67%
Dist. Grade 2	3,961	2,676	1,285	68%
Dist. Grade 3	1,550	959	591	62%
Dist. Grade 4	758	427	331	56%
Dist. Grade 5	323	188	135	58%
Treat. Grade 1	1,173	720	453	61%
Treat. Grade 2	2,666	1,798	868	67%
Treat. Grade 3	740	493	247	67%
Treat. Grade 4	340	204	136	60%
WW Grade 1	873	471	402	54%
WW Grade 2	872	468	404	54%
WW Grade 3	820	265	555	32%
WW Grade 4	247	63	184	26%
WW Grade 5	398	101	297	25%